

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

TOWN HALL RENOVATIONS PROJECT BUILDING COMMITTEE

July 21, 2015

TOWN HALL – HELEN NELSON CONFERENCE ROOM

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

I. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Alan Bongiovanni at 5:03 PM.

II. Roll Call – Members present: Alan Bongiovanni, Chairperson; Jim Marocchini; Dave Nagel; Sarah Jorgensen-Bucchi; Rodney Mortensen; Alan Nafis; and Whit Przech. Others present: Members of the public; Chuck Boos and Freddie Khericha, Kaestle Boos Associates; Joe Desautel, Ed Moriarty, Dave MacDonald and Tracy Brennan, Downes Construction Company; Dave Langdon, Director of Facilities Management; and Jeff Baron, Director of Administrative Services.

III. Public Participation – Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. On her way into the meeting she had to give direction to the auditorium to others. She requests that better signage be put in the project.

-Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. She thanks the Committee for what they have done and the hours they have put in. She has several suggestions. She urges the Committee to release an inclusive statement after each meeting. The Committee has heard from only two departments, the Board of Education and Parks & Recreation, on what their wants and needs are. The same consideration should be given to each department. Each department head should be at the public hearings. After the last referendum, focus groups cited reasons for its defeat that were not just the cost but also a lack of communication. There should be better publicity and public notification for the public hearing.

- John Bachand, of 56 Maple Hill Drive had a prepared statement that was read by Patty Foley. He thanked the Committee for its efforts. He has previously made his feelings regarding the project known. He is concerned that the plans center on an elite few who have made Parks and Recreation a priority. There is no evidence of structural failure in the building. Other older buildings are not torn down but outfitted with modern mechanicals. Renovation could utilize the courtyard. The Town Hall is tired but not worn out. He asks that the Committee please rededicate itself to the charge of the community.

- Patty Foley, 51 Crown Ridge. The vote on the \$30 million bond for the building in the park showed that communication was imperative. The cost was too high. The Committee needs to look at what Newington can afford. It should consider other projects in Town also.

IV. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Mr. Mortensen made a motion to approve the corrected minutes of the June 16, 2015 meeting as presented. A second to the motion was

made by Mr. Nagel. The motion passed by a vote of 6 YES to 0 NO, with 1 abstention (Mr. Marocchini, absent from meeting).

V. Soil Borings Report - Mr. Baron stated that the report has been received and distributed to the Committee. It did not contain anything that was unanticipated.

VI. Project Presentation for Public Hearing - Mr. Bongiovanni noted that the Town Council had scheduled a public hearing for Tuesday, July 28. He anticipates that he and the professionals assisting the Committee will provide a brief presentation on where the Committee is and how we got here. Mr. Mortensen added that at earlier meetings he had spoken of potential issues that might be overwhelming. The public needs to know the upside and the downside. It needs to know what the alternative is. That is an important aspect of the project. Mr. Nafis stated that when he has done studies for others, he would identify that the first alternative is to do nothing. Next is the minimum cost to renovate. The public is concerned about the price, but they have yet to hear a definition of rehabilitate in place. The Committee needs to explain why we are doing this in the first place. The Committee needs to explain why it can't just do a minimum of repair. It needs to explain why this project has to be done and the magnitude that is needed to meet the Town's needs. Mr. Langdon stated that any repairs he would perform would be temporary. Mr. Bongiovanni stated he would like to know what would have to happen if the referendum fails. If the Town were to just renovate what it has today, what would that cost?

Mr. Boos responded that he would need definition. This is the first time he has heard this request. He can work with the Construction Manager on that. There is an assessed value for the building. The building would still need to be brought completely up to code. Accessibility is a major issue. You would renovate the entire building with no functional improvements. The Committee would want to consider energy conservation. Would it keep the current steam heat plant? He would need to program what it would take for the building to be brought up to modern standards. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that this was not a concept posed to the architect because it was not in the Committee's charge. Such a project would have to improve energy efficiency and address all codes, Americans with Disabilities Act, egress, roof and environmental matters. The Committee needs an order of magnitude number. Mr. Moriarty stated that he can put a price to anything, it is the degree of accuracy that takes a little work. He would need a clear understanding of what would be done in each of the areas. Mr. Boos felt that to do this in a week is an injustice to the work that has been done. Mr. Moriarty pointed out that there would be a number of questions. Would this include replacing windows? Is the gym beyond salvage? To meet this request would require some design work and there would be several questions to be asked. Mr. Boos reminded the Committee that in the prior project the removal of the gym provided access to the courtyard. Some of the ideas expressed don't meet code. This estimate and program can't be completed in such a short period of time. The Committee is looking for a realistic number. It would have to release Downes from their requirement to provide a guaranteed maximum price.

Mr. Bongiovanni asked, if the referendum failed, what would need to be done 12, 24, 36 months out? Mr. Przech asked if there were reports from the Fire Marshal and Building Official? Mr. Bongiovanni replied that the problems of the Town Hall were

identified in the Kaestle Boos Associates Existing Conditions Report. The Committee can't do band aids and repairs that will just last for five years. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt the Committee couldn't have the public hearing if it didn't have this renovation estimate. Mr. Bongiovanni stated it goes back to the Committee's charge. The Town Manager and the Project Architect met with the departments to determine their needs. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi stated that a lot of people want to keep the building. They don't care what the Town Hall looks like. The Committee needs to be prepared to give them a number to renovate it. Mr. Nagel stated that the public wants to see what can be done for repairs. Without this number they will be less receptive. They need to see that the Committee has come forth with a concrete element of what that option offers. Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the Committee's program needs to meet the needs of the departments. This needs to be explained clearly. The Town Hall is an old school that is not designed to properly accommodate today's needs.

Mr. Marocchini asked how the Committee was going to get a grasp from both sides without more people expressing their opinions. The Committee needs to fill this room up. The Committee probably also needs a number to renovate in place. Mr. Mortensen expressed his frustration. He did not agree to sit on a repair committee. That should be the Town Council's purview. Repairs are not in the charge of the building committee. You can't govern by the remarks of a handful of people. The Committee needs to go forward with renovating Town Hall and stop spinning its wheels. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi felt it was an embarrassment the Committee didn't do these numbers in the beginning. The focus groups said to renovate what we had. The cost will be an issue. The Committee didn't listen to what the public said. Mr. Bongiovanni replied that the Committee has a charge. More space is needed. The charge was never just to renovate. He felt this number was just to provide information to the public. Mr. Nafis observed that you get into a lot of questions. The Committee needs to get people to understand why we are doing the project. He came into the process four to five months in. The Committee needs to educate the people on what it all means; what renovation would mean and what not renovating would mean.

Mr. Desautel stated that his company's proposal had pre-referendum tasks. Preparing for a referendum is a need that the Committee has. Services are important. Prior to the last referendum there were 19 budgets with a renovation scheme. The Committee has an inventory of information. Downes Construction would need time with Kaestle Boos and the owner to pull it apart. Downes Construction does real budgets that it stands behind. The cost of renovation only is a valid question. For the public hearing the Committee should have answers to almost any question. Mr. Boos reminded the Committee that the previous solution had Parks and Recreation leaving the building. That is where the problem lies. As they are staying this is not a cut and paste solution. The charge was to bring back Parks and Recreation at all costs. The last budget was to renovate two-thirds of the building for \$21 million. Mr. Bongiovanni stated he is also looking for a renovate-as-new number. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi reiterated that the Committee is not prepared for next Tuesday. Mr. Marocchini felt that for the first public hearing the Committee could state where it is today. Mr. Bongiovanni felt that the Committee could state that it was working on other options.

Mr. MacDonald encouraged the Town to have the public hearing as planned. It is already posted on the Town's website. The Committee won't have every answer. The

Committee should show what it has been doing for seven months. The price is irrelevant at this point until the Finance Director shows the projected cost on the Town's debt burden. That will be an exact number. The cost needs to translate into something that makes sense to somebody. Also, you have post referendum poll results. In those a significant number said they would consider supporting the project if the building was not in the park. There is room for solutions to be discussed. Ms. Jorgensen-Bucchi stated that a year is a long time. Many things are coming to a head for the Town. A lot of other buildings need work. She asked for any presentation to be distributed to the Committee in advance. Mr. Marocchini noted that all public hearings have to be explained. The debt level also needs to be explained. Mr. Boos stated that his presentation will be a work in progress. He intends to show the new building that meets the program. He doesn't know if he will be able to distribute his presentation prior to the public hearing. Mr. Przech asked if, under the renovate-as-new concept, the building would be occupied or not? Mr. Nafis mentioned that there is also a cost to operate a new building. That should also be mentioned. Mr. Desautel concluded the discussion by saying that Downes Construction would present work that it has done previously. Kaestle Boos Associates has a bulleted presentation for each scheme.

VII. Any Other Business Pertinent to the Committee – Mr. Baron informed the Committee that a second public hearing was being scheduled for August 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>, during the day, at the Senior and Disabled Center. Mr. Bongiovanni noted that the Committee still wished to receive input regarding the project from new Parks and Recreation Superintendent Bill DeMaio. Mr. Baron will invite Mr. DeMaio to the next meeting. The Committee agreed to hold their next meeting on August 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.

VIII. Public Participation – Steven Silvia, 45 Basswood Street. He appreciates the dialogue he has heard this evening. He does not envy the Committee. He agrees with Mr. Mortensen in the element of embarrassment. That is the result of interpreting the charge a little too liberally. He is glad the Committee is looking at the costs to renovate the building. He recently completed a project for \$180 per square foot. Social media has been very adamant when it comes to price analysis; doing so will serve the Committee well. The Committee should ask for a full renovation to code. He would also encourage the Committee to vet out the wants from the departments. The Board of Education's program request has resulted in 7,500 square feet of storage. What is being called space needs are really space wants. Read the charge that was given to the Committee and focus on it. If he could receive the drawings on CAD he could provide assistance at his own cost to the Project Building Committee.

- Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive. What does renovate-as-new mean? She would like to see the Committee present three plans with bullets for the pros and cons of each scenario. Communication has been a problem in the past. The Committee should consider robo calls.

- John Bachand, 56 Maple Hill Avenue. Everything for other Committees is debated and discussed at 7:00 PM meetings. He hopes there will not be any more 5:00 PM meetings. Quite a few others think as he does. The previous cost estimates are unacceptable numbers. He is not sure what renovate as new means. The Committee needs to come up with better reasoning before tearing the building down. He can't accept the proposition

that the building is tired or worn out. He is working on buildings that are over 100 years old. He needs a better explanation why the building should be torn down. He wants the building renovated in its current footprint.

- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. She asked about the charge of the Committee at the last meeting. She then read the Committee's charge. She doesn't see "need" or "want" in that charge. She is shocked to hear Mr. Boos say that the charge was to bring Parks and Recreation back in the building at all costs. She outlined the previous referendum project process. The Committee still doesn't know what the Committee wants to do. The Committee might want bullet points to questions asked previously. She wants a building worthy of the people who work in it. It is a crime to have been waiting this long. She would like to see some choices and not just one scenario.

- Maureen Klett, 104 Harold Drive. The Town Council may have failed the Building Committee by not giving the Building Committee a dollar figure right off the bat. She is of the belief that the project could go to referendum with two thoughts; a project that meets the needs of the community and also a project that is the bare minimum. Cost is an issue on social media. She believes people are hesitant to admit it is an issue, but it is an issue for some people. Even in the face of opposition sometimes you have to make decisions that are right for the community. The loss of park land was the most important issue last time. Some don't want the building torn down, others favor it. The Building Committee should do what it feels is right for the Town. It should consider offering two referendum options.

- Patty Foley, 51 Crown Ridge. The Committee should show what is not included in the plan so the public understands what is going on. 7,000 people voted in the last referendum. Taxes will go up every year. Raised have been approved for each of the next three years. Money that is borrowed is paid off on a twenty year debt schedule. The Town is still paying off the school and the police department today. There is a need to bring out what the bigger picture is. Other structures will need work. You can't make decisions in a vacuum. There will be a public hearing next week without all the information ready to present. It is tough to attend multiple public hearings if you are afraid you will miss information presented at only one of the public hearings.

- Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive. At the Town Council meeting questions were asked by members of the public. The public hearing is not expected to have give and take. Could the Building Committee take notes and answer the questions that are asked?

IX. Response to Public Participation –Mr. Bongiovanni stated that the Building Committee has not gone astray on its duties or its charge. It has been very consistent. The idea of looking for information from the public came about in the past week. The Committee's goal is to present the best project for the Town of Newington. It doesn't want band aids. His definition of renovate-as-new is to take any system or component and replace it for the life cycle of the facility. Regarding needs, it is not in the charge of the Committee to tell departments what they need. Mr. Przech added that while the New Britain City Hall had been renovated that was over 100 years old, this was an historical preservation project. There is no historical significance to this building.

X. Adjournment – the meeting adjourned at 6:53 PM.